Free! Free!

The Seattle Area Magickal Times

"Guard the Mysteries- Reveal them constantly."

Volume I, Issue 2 | Serving the Neo-Pagan and Magickal Communities | Lunasa, 1993C.E.

Edge of the Circle Books is Moving!

Yes, it's true! After *one year* Edge of the Circle is ready to move into a much larger, less obscure location: 701 E. Pike at the corner of E. Pike and Boylston, two blocks west of Broadway on Capital Hill. (See *Editorial* on page two for more details.)

⛤ VS. ✝ THE DISTINCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

by Angeleno

Not so long ago I wrote a message on a local computer bulletin board system. That message was a comment inspired by a previous one which had proposed that it was possible to be a Christian and a Witch simultaneously. I argued that this was logically impossible if one was to adhere to the principles of either viewpoint.

This article recapitulates that posting in part, and proposes that the term Christian-Witch is an oxymoron.

By way of prologue, let me say that I have no purpose to insult or derogate Christianity. My personal view is that the Wiccan viewpoint is very much superior to that of the Christian establishment, but my purpose here is to demonstrate that the two are irreconcilable on either logical, theological or ethical grounds.

Let me also say what should need no repetition: my expression of the Witch's viewpoint is my own and does not propose to state the belief of any other person, witch or not.

The subject is vast, therefore I have limited myself to observations in five areas: Cosmology, Thealogy, Ethics, Politics, and Psychology.

Cosmology

Let us begin with beginnings.

I take the Cosmos to be all-that-is, including what humans can know and all that we cannot know.

The Christian view is that the cosmos we perceive is created purposely by a singular deity called Jahweh. This purpose is not stated clearly in Christian texts, but there is no doubt that there is a purpose, otherwise Jahweh would be acting either out of caprice or unconsciously, neither of which is consistent with a transcendental deity.

The witch sees the universe as evidence of the interaction of forces and principles beyond human ken. The cosmos 'is', beyond all concepts of time and change and space. consequently, the cosmos cannot have a purpose, for purpose requires change, and change requires time and time is the antithesis of eternity.

The concept of "creation" of the Cosmos is nonsense to the Witch. In this viewpoint, the cosmos we see is not the whole story, it is the universe of what-we-can-know, neither more nor less. Therefore, to the Witch, all human infinities

Continued Page 3

An Interview with Steve Wells, Director of Crossroads Learning Center

by Wendy Van Allen

One thing is clear to a casual visitor at Crossroads Learning Center, a non-profit educational center on Capital Hill, there is something here for everyone. The range of workshop and educational topics is staggering: global healing workshops, Reiki therapy, gay and lesbian spirituality, dream workshops, storytelling, creative magickal techniques, drum making, rebirthing, yoga, martial arts, etc.

Steve Wells, Director and founder of Crossroads said this eclectic approach was one of the original goals he had in mind when he decided to bring the center into being in 1990.

"My original concept for Crossroads was an inclusive center for healing where it was possible for people from various perspectives to come together and acknowledge that all of us have parts of the puzzle, and we need each part. I wanted a place where we could understand we all have different ways of doing things, and we should allow and encourage that diversity." said Wells.

According to Wells, in the past two years Crossroads has hosted over 400 classes, workshops and cultural events; and over 100 private rituals, events and therapy sessions.

Before beginning Crossroads, Wells spent a great part of his life bringing people together. "As I grow in my life, I see my work as creating spaces. One thing that I really enjoy doing is throwing parties, bringing people together to get turned on to new ways of doing things; making connections really turns me on." he said.

Wells has a history of working with people. Before Crossroads, Wells managed a food co-op in Eastern Washington. "I believe that belongs in the lineage of Crossroads. The co-op was a community center which I ran according to very Pagan principles of interdependence and connections," he said.

Another significant part of Wells life was spent in the 1980's with Charlie Murphy and Good Fairy Productions. "We were a gay men's cultural collective which produced concerts, dances and various cultural events. I helped produce the album "Catch the Fire" which included the song "The Burning Times" which was very popular. I worked with Charlie as his booking agent. We worked on encouraging and facilitating connections and growth. At one point, we tried to put together a 1/2 million dollar

cont. on page 6

EDITORIAL

BY GWENETH STONE

ON THE FIRST ISSUE

Well, the first issue of Magickal Times was well received, despite (or perhaps because of) it's theme. I have gotten a lot of positive comments and even a few negative ones. Actually, I was hoping that the paper would be a little more controversial than it has been (or maybe those who were horrified or offended simply chose not to come forward), Ah well, better luck this time.

ERRATA

In Dana Corby's article The Perfect Couple in the last issue, there were a few typos. In the second column, fourth paragraph, replace the two usages of "secular" with "sexual." As you might imagine, this changes the context somewhat.

THIS ISSUE

This issue doesn't really have a theme, but a few of the pieces kind of relate to one another. Perhaps this could be the "Pagan Image" issue. We will explore several people's ideas about the relationship between Christianity and Paganism, for those of you who need a refresher course. We will also be looking at the wisdom of good works and random acts of kindness.

CHANGES AT EDGE OF THE CIRCLE

There have been a few significant changes around the store lately, with many more to come within the next month or so.

First of all, the store will be relocating sometime around the end of August. The new location isn't far from where we are now, just two blocks west of Broadway at the corner of Pike and Boylston. The new store will be much larger and will have plenty of room for the steadily increasing inventory. Hopefully, we will be expanding our sections on Wicca and Witchcraft, Santeria and Vodoun, Sex Magick, Tantra, and Eastern philosophy, Erotica and Modern Primitivism.

Edge of the Circle is also expanding in an exciting *new* direction. With the relocation we will also be opening the *Green Man Café*, a Pagan hangout spot. The Green Man will be serving espresso and a wide selection of teas and mineral waters as well as all sorts of munchies like scones, pastries, muffins, cheesecakes and fruit, etc.

There are a few other changes as well: Robert Anderson is the new store manager. Chris Smith will be managing the Green Man and I am now working full-time on the Magickal Times. I am also managing all of the advertising for the store in other newspapers, radio and...yes, it's true, television. We *will* be doing TV commercials starting sometime this fall and I am really jazzed.

Walk in wisdom.

Gwen T

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You never know.

We will accept submissions of camera-ready artwork & photos, articles, poetry, reviews, letters, etc.

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ASK WITCH HAZEL

This column is intended to be a pagan advice column, along the lines of "Dear Abby", "Dear Ann Landers" and "Savage Love." I will accept questions on just about any topic that you wish, but space limitations restrict how many I can answer in any one issue. Also, be it known that the answers to your questions are purely my own viewpoint. I will strive to be as objective as possible, but since I am answering mostly from my varied and vast life experience, the expectation that I can be truly objective is just not exactly reasonable. Send your questions to Witch Hazel c/o Magickal Times.

Dear Witch Hazel,
What is the difference between white, black and gray Magick? What would be the repercussions of practicing each? --Just Wondering.

Dear J.W.,
This is a question where most of "The Experts" and I disagree. I believe there is no black, white or gray Magick.
Magick is Magick, the only difference is intent, and if you are willing to receive back multiplied whatever you send out, then practice whatever type of Magick you choose. Just keep in mind that some forms of *supposed* "White Magick" can be destructive and have negative effects and some forms of what some may call "Black Magick" may be, at times, appropriate to the situation. So it depends greatly on whom you ask, but my advice is not to dance if you can't afford to pay the fiddler.

Dear Witch Hazel,
I have gone to several open circles, rituals etc., put on by various groups and organizations in the area. I understand that there are different traditions, etc. Why do I feel no sense of wonder, or religious connection? What about this "energy" everyone talks about?
I'm not exactly sure what is supposed to be happening, but I don't feel a thing. Is this all there is? I might as well go back to the church. --Dazed & Confused.

Dear D & C,
I can identify with you and no, you're not religiously frigid. Most of the public rituals that I have attended have been fairly tame, with one or two exceptions. Some groups and organizations are more afraid of raising energy than others, or should I say more "conservative". You will find that the "Fundamentalist Pagans" are almost as conservative as their Christian neighbors. Understand that there is a difference between "open" circle work and "closed" circle work. "Open circle" means literally open to the public or whoever sees the notices. Therefore, you have all levels of experience and spiritual awareness from total beginners to Elders in the Craft. The rituals are usually structured somewhere in the beginning to middle levels of complexity and energy , so that everyone may participate in their comfort zone. When you work with a larger group it is much more difficult to control the energy, easier for things to get out of hand and for someone to get zapped. The High Priest & Priestess officiating at the ritual should be responsible for the welfare of the attendees, therefore most tend to err on the wimpy side As far as feeling a connection with your chosen Dieties, that is a matter of the skill of the person doing the invoking and of your level of sensitivity. I have known people to feel the presence of the goddess without any invocation, and those for whom she may never actually be "felt" but we know she's there just the same. Even Pagans have "faith". So if you want to really feel the energy, find a private group to work with. In the meantime practice raising energy yourself and be persistent, it is sometimes kind like an orgasm, doesn't always happen the first few times. So keep trying and I'm sure that you will indeed feel the Magick, as it is.

Dear Witch Hazel,
I have been looking for a teacher for some time, with no success. Every time I find someone who may be a possibility, people tell me they are not a good teacher, or they are unethical or something or other is wrong with them. Please tell me how to go about finding a teacher without looking like a fool. I am new to the Craft and fairly new to Seattle, so I don't even know the people that well who are telling me who not to study with. --Clueless.

Dear Clueless,
What a dilemma! Do you go against the people you have met so far, who may or may not be pillars of the community, or do you listen to them and maybe miss out on a great teacher? This is one of those questions that really has no clear cut answer. My usual advice for someone who is seeking a teacher and/or a group to work with is this; Do not listen to gossip, information about a person's qualifications should be given by the person in question. The people that are advising you may have their own agenda, they may be jealous or may have some personal reason for disliking a particular teacher

that has nothing to do with whether or not the teacher is qualified and/or ethical. Besides who but the goddess is fit to judge?
When seeking a teacher you should first decide what it is you desire to learn, and then seek out the person that can teach you that. If you want to learn about Celtic Paganism, you would not study with a teacher whose focus is Feminist Goddess Worship, and vise versa. There are numerous classes in basic Wicca, and related subjects, talk with the teachers of the classes in which you have interest and find out where you fit in. Be aware that some people have requirements of their students and you may also be considered by the teacher. I believe in following your instincts about mostly everything, so if there are two people who are offering the same teaching, go with one *you* feel the most comfortable with.. Also, asking at your local Pagan bookstore and watching for notices on bulletin boards and in publications such as this one is a good idea. Making your own informed decision is a good place to start your study. Good luck and Blesséd Be.

The Distinction of Christianity, cont.

are bounded. The Christian thinks that the cosmos will end. Indeed for more than two thousand years they have expected it to end presently. That it stubbornly refuses to do so does not deter them in the least. Consequently, the Christian life is led not with its focus on the world in which the Christian exists, but in a fantasy world which is due to arrive any day now on trailing clouds of glory followed by and "end" of the universe {apparently} and a general judgment and sorting out of all immortal souls according to one or another set of criteria, depending on which brand of Christianity one adopts. To the Christian these distinctions between sects and cults within the Christian sphere are of the greatest moment.
To the witch they mean nothing at all.

Indeed, to the witch there is no concept of an universal end. As mentioned above, the universe of the witch is eternal and eternity has nothing to do with time. Eternity is not a long time, it is NO TIME. Consequently the witch lives here and now {or ought to} with no worry and no concern about some final judgment day, because there will never be one. The witch seeks to perceive clearly. No adoption of one sect or cult is intrinsically superior to another. Be you Gardnerian, Alexandrian, Family Tradition, Solitary, Thunderbird or Dianic the only question is "is it right for you?" If it is, do it, if it isn't, change. None are better or worse than the other, although people argue as if they might be.

Thealogy/Theology

To the Christian Jahweh is the one God who precedes, transcends, and authors the universe and all in it. There is no other divinity but he and all that is reflects and embodies his directed will.

To the witch, Gods and Goddesses are part of the universe and dwell within it. These are not the authors of reality, neither are they its arbiters.

It is no surprise that humanity tends to interpret experience and phenomena in dualistic terms. We are binaural, binocular, and have a brain with two distinct lobes.

The Witch sees divinity as a duality, employing the symbol of the Great Mother Goddess and the Great Horned god to represent these duality's. As every witch knows, the range of interpretation among them is very great indeed. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that virtually all Witches accept a dualistic view of divinity.

To the Christian, "God" is something to which one is going. To the Witch, the Goddess and God are beings which come to us. Although the Roman Catholics do propose to invoke Jesus into bread and wine, it is not exactly the same as Drawing Down the Moon or Sun into one's self.

The Christian God is approached with court flattery, as a terrible and wrathful being who must be propitiated.

The Witches approach their goddess and God by surrendering their selves to them, firm in the knowledge that the Gods are gracious to humanity, beneficial and loving.

Psychology

The psychology of Christianity is essentially a con.

The Christian teaching is and always has been that the world is ending soon, and that this end will involve the judgment of everyone, and that those judged worthy will receive eternal bliss and those judged unworthy will receive eternal torment. In order to be judged worthy one must be "saved". The one and only means of salvation is to accept Jesus Christ as one's personal "lord and master", and to obey his teachings and tenets of whatever church one is joining in order to secure this salvation.

The variations on this theme are numerous, but one cannot purport to be Christian without being in the necessity of salvation through Jesus.

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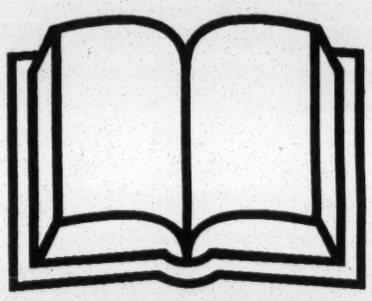


REVIEWS

To Ride A Silver Broomstick
New Generation Witchcraft

by Silver RavenWolf
from Llewellyn Publications
$14.95

REVIEW
by Dana Corby

When I received Llewellyn's invitation to review this book, I looked at the gawdawful cover, read the accompanying blurb, and sent away for it immediately. This is gonna be fun, I thought, trashing this piece of junk. Another idiot telling people that all it takes to be a Witch is the intent and a "few simple exercises that anyone can master".

And then I got it in the mail. The cover was even worse that it looked in the picture -- purple, for pity's sake, and a nymphet with a sappy "soulful" gaze riding side-saddle on a broom with a lighted candle on the leading end and a lavender bow on the brush. Groan. Reluctantly, I opened it and started reading.

I disagree with it's basic premise...but this is a damn good book.

Folks, this is a damn good book. I disagree with its basic premise, which is that anyone can make themselves into a Witch, without benefit of year-and-a-day formal teaching and without hands-on initiation. I'm an old-fashioned Traditionalist; I believe that only a Witch can make another Witch. But if I was approached by a neophyte who'd been self-studying out of this book, I'd snap them up in a minute. Silver RavenWolf is an excellent teacher.

In the in "About the Author" paragraph that every Llewellyn book has, Silver discusses her Virgo proclivities. I've never seen Virgoism shine brighter. She uses her natal talents to make this the best-organized self-teaching book on the market. And she insists to her readers/students that they, too, must be organized and methodical in their magical and spiritual practices -- and then shows them how. Her suggested table of contents for a Book of Shadows is encyclopedic-, and the worksheets on pages 102 - 103 and 108 - 109 are so good I'm going to adopt them for the coven.

There's also quite a bit of gentle humor, much of it aimed by the author at herself. Some of the anecdotes in the "Divination vs. Fortune telling" chapter are a kick, and the to the chapter titled "Defining the All: Gods, Goddesses, and Human Balance" is sub-headed "You mean I Get to Pick My Own Deities?"

"To Ride A Silver Broomstick" does have what I consider a couple of serious weaknesses. It attempts to cover far to much ground for a book aimed at the absolute beginner, as this is, and thus much of the information is pretty sketchy. The Sabbats, for instance, get one paragraph each. And while there is a suggested reading list at the end of each chapter, mention within the text that "for more information on such-and-such topic (the Sabbats, while we're on that subject) read so-and-so" would be extremely helpful to the struggling student. There are also a few flat-out errors. I'm sure the Aquarian Tabernacle Church was amazed to learn that it's in Oregon.

This book promotes one thing that would have been heresy when I was a student, that I whole-heartedly endorse: the need to network. In my student days teachers actively prevented their students from learning about the existence of other groups. Today, much of what a student learns is through contact with other Witches and networking via the Pagan press and BBS's. Since Silver RavenWolf is the director of the Wiccan/Pagan Press Alliance, she naturally devotes a couple of hefty chapters to how to network, and an entire appendix to listing every publication in the Alliance. It's worth the $14.95 just to get those two things.

A Word About Summerstar

BY GWEN STONE

As Archdruid of the Primitive Celtic Church I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who helped to make Summerstar such a wonderful success. To all of you who attended and to all of our staff and ritualists, and all the vendors: my heartfelt thanks. Even though it was a bit more damp than many of us would have wished, we all had a great time. I'm looking forward to doing it again next year (only bigger). A special thank you to Isaac Bonewits whom we made walk all the way to the site from the Portland airport in the middle of the night. It was uphill in the snow all the way, but he made it in pretty good shape, contrary to earlier reports. We enjoyed having you, Isaac, and we hope you enjoyed being had.

The Holy Isle Grove is now planning *Winterbash*, a catered dinner party with live music.

Distinction cont.

In short, Christianity declares you sick and sells you the cure at expense.

Because of this, Mankind is viewed as intrinsically flawed, and worse than that. Mankind is viewed as irredeemably flawed in the absence of divine intervention. In short, the Christian views humanity as born-sick and requiring salvation. It is no surprise than that the Christian churches sell salvation at varying prices, depending of their particular interpretation of those tenets.

The witch finds all this a great clot of nonsense. To the witch we are born neither flawed nor perfect, but perfectly human. No concept of imposed "sin" or inferiority is acknowledged. Therefore, no concept of salvation is acknowledged simply because there is no reason for it.

The Christian believes that salvation must be obtained by the acceptance of Jesus Christ {the messiah mentioned above} as one's personal lord and savior.

The witch acknowledges no lord of any kind, and has no requirement of any salvation. The witch requires no messiah to speak to the goddess and god for her. The witch may do that unaided, thank you.

The Christian seeks salvation out of fear. The Christian churches unite on one term of dogma: whosoever is not saved is damned eternally to punishment and unhappiness. The merits of this situation aside, it is clearly a grim outlook on the universe and a grim judgment of the moral fiber of Jahweh himself who would destroy the potential happiness of billions of souls simply because they do not find Jesus attractive.

The witch thinks this to be somewhat ludicrous and would find it funny if it had not been the cause of so much horror and bloodshed in this world.

In short, the Christian thinks he is on trial, while the Wiccan thinks he is on stage.

And why does the witch think so? Because to the witch purpose and meaning in life are generated from within, not imposed from without. To burden an infinite and eternal cosmos with either concept is ludicrous. Both meaning and purpose are involved in sequential events and temporal envelopes. The cosmos is beyond both.

The Christian believes that the selection of a religious view carries with it eternal consequences. The witch thinks this a bit much to lay on the shoulders of so fragile and insignificant a being as humanity.

The Christian believes that the purpose of the cosmos is centered on humanity and its collective {and their individual} salvation.

The witch looks at humanity on its little rock, orbiting a very little star, in an out of the way arm of a commonplace galaxy in an undistinguished cluster of galaxies that are themselves at once enroute to nowhere and everywhere and wonders what evidence there is that humanity is the metier of universal reality.

But these distinctions are only the surface of the dichotomy between witchcraft and Christianity

Ethics

Christians are moral, witches are ethical.

Morality is a received code of behavior that is to be applied rigorously to every situation. If the results are lamentable, horrible or painful, so much the better, for that is service to Jahweh and gains great face in heaven for the sufferer. Although anyone with the least experience of life knows that no moral precept can answer to all situations, Christians adamantly insist that their moral code is the exception to the rule. The results of this have been lamentable.

Ethics is a process by which principles of behavior and action are ordered by importance and applied to situations as they arise. What principles these are and how they are ordered is the art that lies within ethics. The process of application is generally governed by paradigms adopted by the witch.

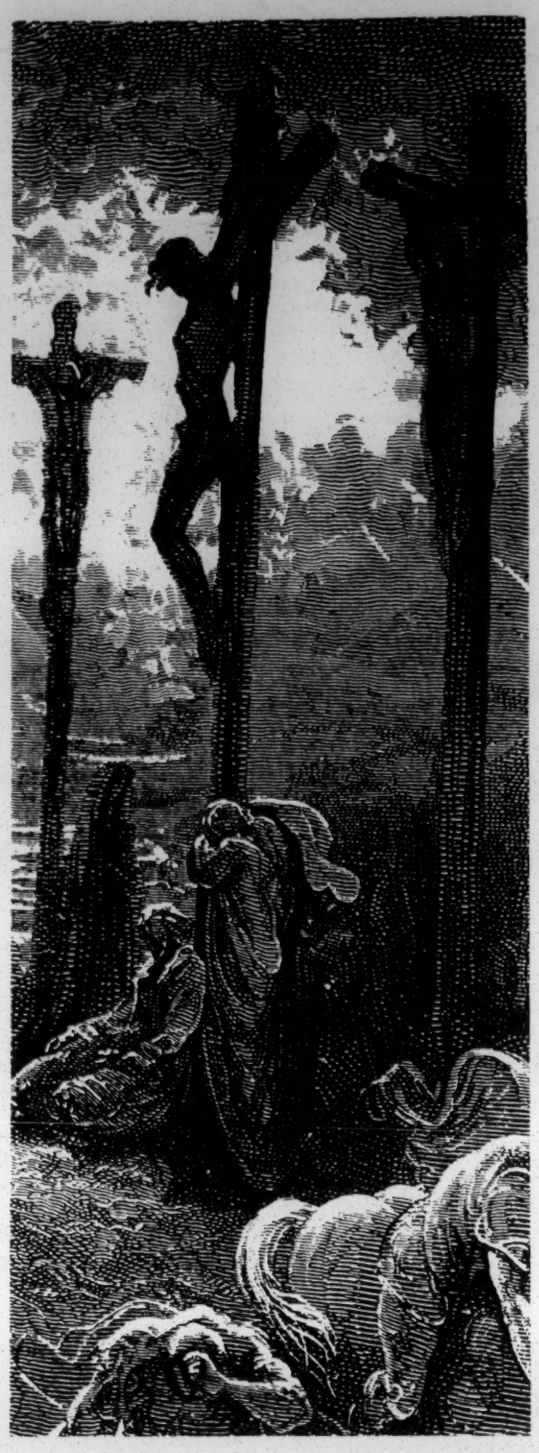
For example, there is a large common ground about humanity, as would be expected in a species that is essentially indistinguishable save to other humans. Murder, rape, robbery, trespass, theft, extortion are but some of the actions that are universally condemned by all sane human beings.

By the obverse, the preservation of life, of personal integrity of property, of dignity are held to be high purposes by all sane humans.

In a situation where the choices are live by theft or die by starvation, the witch will steal what is needed because that is ethical inasmuch as the first order of importance {preserve life} is superior to the second {preserve property}. While the witch must be careful to assure herself that these in fact are the only choices, if that is the case then the right course of action is clear.

Theoretically, a Christian would starve, because theft is morally wrong and moral precepts must be applied unaltered in all situations Therein lies the failure of morality.

To the witch the situation is a sad necessity, to the Christian it is a sin. The witch seeks to improve the situation and to avoid being caught in such a corner again, because to be so caught is to be



evidently powerless in life and power is a goal of every witch. The Christian seeks forgiveness, or finds some clever theological ploy to excuse the behavior. The witch takes responsibility, regardless of the context and defends herself on ethical grounds.

Politics

The ascent of Christianity to its present position of power and influence is inextricably interwoven with Civil Authority and State Power.

Witchcraft has little truck with either.

From the moment the Emperor Constantius declared Christianity the Imperial Religion, the Christian Church has employed the power of Civil Authority to enforce its moral dictates under threat of punishment.

No Witch would ever compel another to belief.

The use of Civil authority to impose religious belief is a corruption of both conspirators. The struggle against this is a fundamental tenet of American Constitutional law and jurisprudence.

Today we see the never-ending struggle of the Christians to enforce their moral views by means of legal sanction. The examples are numerous: Lon Mabon's homophobic terrorism, the efforts that stop short of nothing to suppress a woman's control of her own body, and the list might go on to considerable length, including the lamentable domination of Clam Chowder as soup of the day on Fridays.

The Witch views Civil Authority as a passing phenomena, something that comes and goes. Under no circumstances does the Witch seek to impose her faith or her morals by means of legal sanction.

To the Witch, law is a tool by which civilization is ordered. To the Christian, law is too often a tool by which Christian ideals are enforced and social conformity is required.

To say that the Witches are nonconformists is to put it mildly. The Witch celebrates diversity and seeks a Law that is humane and sane.

The Christian feels compelled to conform the whole race to his moral and spiritual beliefs and uses Law as but one tool by which he might do so.

Conclusion

Upon what basis can one claim to be both a Christian and a Witch?

If the foregoing has merit, one certainly cannot make that claim on logical grounds. The two viewpoints are so opposite, so mutually exclusive as to make Christian-Witch a true oxymoron.

Moreover, to accept the concept of Christian-Witch carries certain dangers to the Craft:

Firstly, it allows the Christian viewpoint and psychology to interpret and invade The Craft, where it will inevitably seek to redefine it in Christian terms:

Secondly, it allows our ancient and unrelenting enemy a role in our own definition of terms. That is something that cannot be allowed if The Craft is to prosper:

Thirdly, it trivializes our Cosmology, Theology, Ethics, Psychology and Politics by supporting the unspoken proposition that one religious view is pretty much the same as another.

When Lord Bertrand Russell, a renowned agnostic, was booked into prison for anti-war activities, he was asked his religion. "Agnostic" he answered. "Well, sir, " said the guard taking down the information, "I suppose w all worship the same god, don't we?"

Witches and Christians do not worship the same God or the Same Goddess. Their two viewpoints are irreconcilable. Nor is there any merit in attempting reconciliation.

Blessed Be

PAGAN PLACE
An opinionated column with Mireille

Are you a good witch or a bad witch? A good Christian or a bad Christian? What a question! So many times, people make assumptions about a person's character based on their own personal ethics and religious beliefs. I'm not just talking about Christians. We as Pagans make all kinds of assumptions about other people, especially Christians. I suppose it's fair enough to acknowledge that many of us left Christianity due to feelings of oppression, bigotry, outright hostility and intolerance, but that isn't the case for everyone. The Christian mystics experience a sense of rapture and a sincere connection to their God that many of us (should we have the experience) would recognize as a true invocation of our Gods in an intense ritual setting. Perhaps we should understand and realize that much of Christianity's (or Judaism, Muslim, etc.) doctrine and dogma is what causes us so much consternation and anguish, not the people. I could go on and on in this vein, but as it turns out, a friend of mine Cynne, also had some thoughts on the subject:

MY SECRET LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN
BY CYNNE, HOUSE OF BAPH

"You're a good, Christian woman," Cindy's mom said to me on the phone the other day. Now, I wasn't about to disagree with her, as this was about the highest compliment she, a proper Southern Baptist woman, could pay me. Besides, I think it would disturb her greatly if I told her that her daughter had been friends with a Pagan. In her mind, that would be tantamount to consorting with the Devil himself, and it would bring all sorts of grief into Cindy's life if she tried to retain our friendship. I just smiled to myself and thanked her.

Often I have introduced Cindy to my Pagan friends as " the most tolerant Southern Baptist I know," much to their amusement. She has now taken to referring to me as "the most Christian Pagan she knows." At first I laughed at this seeming oxymoron. Christian Pagan? It sounds like a surefire road to schizophrenia, I thought, having left the arms of the Catholic Church almost 10 years ago. But then I thought again. What exactly did a Christian like Cindy mean when she described me, an avowed Pagan, as a Christian? What did her mother mean, when she knows absolutely nothing about my religious choices or upbringing?

I suppose that first and foremost, a Christian is a follower of a Christian church, a church which acknowledges Jesus Christ as it savior and the Son of God, and takes the Bible, in some form or another, as its holy book. But I really don't think that Cindy or her mother meant this when referring to me. What made me "Christian" to them?

In their eyes, I was a Christian because of my actions. I went out of my way to offer my help and support to Cindy when she was beaten up by her boyfriend. I held her when she cried. I gave what advice I could from my own similar experience. I did what I thought a good Friend should do for another. I did what I thought a good Person would do for another. These actions made me a Christian to Cindy and her mother. The most important point is, though, that these actions would describe a good Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Pagan or Atheist.

And that's the biggest point of all: a good person is a good person, no matter what religion, if any, he or she chooses to follow. We in the Pagan community have all been guilty at one time or another of "Christian bashing." Maybe it's time that we all stood back and took a good look and realized that no one gave us the Top Secret file on whose god (or gods) is better. Who is to say what the difference is, if any , in the whole cosmic scheme of things, between Jehovah, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Pan, Freya, or Lir? After all, we're all guessing and doing what works best for each one of us personally. And it does work. It works for all of us on an individual level. Sometimes we're lucky enough to be able to share that experience with others, either through a similar belief or by demonstration through public display or ritual. Sometimes there just isn't enough common ground to share. That's O.K. That doesn't make either side wrong -- just far apart.

O.K., we're all going to run into a few Christian jerks who will belittle us and slander our beliefs, sometimes on national television, but that doesn't mean we have to condemn their entire religion. Let's face it, we have some jerks of our own, and none of us want to be judged on the basis of their actions. Unfortunately, though, we validate some of the negative stereotypes on our own, without any help from Christians, through our own voices against our own community. We must not only avoid "Christian bashing," but also "ATC bashing," "Georgian bashing," "coven bashing," etc. I know we can't possibly like or agree with everyone, and I am the last person to advocate total white bread and Smurf love. But I do advocate a little more judging of an individual on his or her own merits, not by who you may have seen them talking to at the last community full moon. Not all Christians or Christian sects are bad and intolerant, not all Pagans or Pagan sects are good and tolerant. Balance folks, its a fact of life.

So let's do a little more talking to people and a little less talking about people. Let's open our eyes a little more and our mouths a little less. And let's hope that through our example some of them learn to do the same.

MEDITATION: OAK MOON
BY ORIANNA

We approach the grove in silence. Most of us are wrapped in cloaks of dark colors to blend into the night. The sky above the meadow is shrouded in heavy grey clouds, but it is warm and dry out.

We know the full moon rides high tonight. I have a single candle lit to lead the way, but the glare actually makes it harder to see. Holding the candle higher, the sacred grove appears before us, surrounded by meadow.

We stumble over fallen branches and downed trees, pushing our way through the debris created by the high wind storm of early spring. Each of us is seeking, in the dark, a place to settle that will perhaps lend us a sense of safety and more, a connection with the sacred. Struggling with the restraints of the mundane world, the people spread out to find their own altars, where they can light their incense and candle.

For me, there is still a sense of rending. The grove stands naked, now, with gaping holes where huge bodies of trees came crashing down. For six months prior to the storm the grove was there for me with her perfectly manicured forest floor, serenity of meadow and sea surrounding her.

I have not even dared to enter her, meditating instead, for these last few months, in the meadow. Now I am braver. And, I have other sacred ones with me. Or is it just that it is finally time. Suddenly without forethought, I know what I must do. With a sense of confidence I leave the others. I plant my incense stick at the base of a tree and pull out my Athame. Silently, intuitively, I begin the re-casting of the sacred space. From the center to the edge and out I dance and work in a secret language not known to me.

A healing begins within and without. Circles within circles, each with a different purpose. As they speak to me, the many, the one, the voice of the grove a little piece of wounded nature heals.

"Do this! Now, that." I listen and obey. My objective self is laughing as I go places I dare not under ordinary sight. The things we do in the name of healing! Finally, slowing in my work, I sense that feeling of wholeness, of security. Is it mine or the grove's? Does it matter? Peace and tranquillity permeate this little forest. It radiates outward to illuminate the meadows. I realize the shining, full moon has come out from hiding. Not a single cloud in the sky, as a matter of fact. "When did this happen?" I whispered to a sister Priestess who was standing naked in the meadow. She replied "I was determined to have my Moon-bath!" The rest of my time was spent with the elements and being with the grove. I am amazed to see vibrating trees. I can almost hear them speak to one another, to the sky, the sea.

Unlike the first six months where I felt the grove was there for me, this time I am hit by the realization that I was there for the grove. Thus, my seventh Moon lesson. May the Gods preserve the Craft and the Craft preserve the Gods.

Distinction cont.

In short, Christianity declares you sick and sells you the cure at expense.

Because of this, Mankind is viewed as intrinsically flawed, and worse than that. Mankind is viewed as irredeemably flawed in the absence of divine intervention. In short, the Christian views humanity as born-sick and requiring salvation. It is no surprise than that the Christian churches sell salvation at varying prices, depending of their particular interpretation of those tenets.

The witch finds all this a great clot of nonsense. To the witch we are born neither flawed nor perfect, but perfectly human. No concept of imposed "sin" or inferiority is acknowledged. Therefore, no concept of salvation is acknowledged simply because there is no reason for it.

The Christian believes that salvation must be obtained by the acceptance of Jesus Christ {the messiah mentioned above} as one's personal lord and savior.

The witch acknowledges no lord of any kind, and has no requirement of any salvation. The witch requires no messiah to speak to the goddess and god for her. The witch may do that unaided, thank you.

The Christian seeks salvation out of fear. The Christian churches unite on one term of dogma: whosoever is not saved is damned eternally to punishment and unhappiness. The merits of this situation aside, it is clearly a grim outlook on the universe and a grim judgment of the moral fiber of Jahweh himself who would destroy the potential happiness of billions of souls simply because they do not find Jesus attractive.

The witch thinks this to be somewhat ludicrous and would find it funny if it had not been the cause of so much horror and bloodshed in this world.

In short, the Christian thinks he is on trial, while the Wiccan thinks he is on stage.

And why does the witch think so? Because to the witch purpose and meaning in life are generated from within, not imposed from without. To burden an infinite and eternal cosmos with either concept is ludicrous. Both meaning and purpose are involved in sequential events and temporal envelopes. The cosmos is beyond both.

The Christian believes that the selection of a religious view carries with it eternal consequences. The witch thinks this a bit much to lay on the shoulders of so fragile and insignificant a being as humanity.

The Christian believes that the purpose of the cosmos is centered on humanity and its collective {and their individual} salvation.

The witch looks at humanity on its little rock, orbiting a very little star, in an out of the way arm of a commonplace galaxy in an undistinguished cluster of galaxies that are themselves at once enroute to nowhere and everywhere and wonders what evidence there is that humanity is the metier of universal reality.

But these distinctions are only the surface of the dichotomy between witchcraft and Christianity

Ethics

Christians are moral, witches are ethical.

Morality is a received code of behavior that is to be applied rigorously to every situation. If the results are lamentable, horrible or painful, so much the better, for that is service to Jahweh and gains great face in heaven for the sufferer. Although anyone with the least experience of life knows that no moral precept can answer to all situations, Christians adamantly insist that their moral code is the exception to the rule. The results of this have been lamentable.

Ethics is a process by which principles of behavior and action are ordered by importance and applied to situations as they arise. What principles these are and how they are ordered is the art that lies within ethics. The process of application is generally governed by paradigms adopted by the witch.

For example, there is a large common ground about humanity, as would be expected in a species that is essentially indistinguishable save to other humans. Murder, rape, robbery, trespass, theft, extortion are but some of the actions that are universally condemned by all sane human beings.

By the obverse, the preservation of life, of personal integrity of property, of dignity are held to be high purposes by all sane humans.

In a situation where the choices are live by theft or die by starvation, the witch will steal what is needed because that is ethical inasmuch as the first order of importance {preserve life} is superior to the second {preserve property}. While the witch must be careful to assure herself that these in fact are the only choices, if that is the case then the right course of action is clear.

Theoretically, a Christian would starve, because theft is morally wrong and moral precepts must be applied unaltered in all situations Therein lies the failure of morality.

To the witch the situation is a sad necessity, to the Christian it is a sin. The witch seeks to improve the situation and to avoid being caught in such a corner again, because to be so caught is to be

evidently powerless in life and power is a goal of every witch. The Christian seeks forgiveness, or finds some clever theological ploy to excuse the behavior. The witch takes responsibility, regardless of the context and defends herself on ethical grounds.

Politics

The ascent of Christianity to its present position of power and influence is inextricably interwoven with Civil Authority and State Power.

Witchcraft has little truck with either.

From the moment the Emperor Constantius declared Christianity the Imperial Religion, the Christian Church has employed the power of Civil Authority to enforce its moral dictates under threat of punishment.

No Witch would ever compel another to belief.

The use of Civil authority to impose religious belief is a corruption of both conspirators. The struggle against this is a fundamental tenet of American Constitutional law and jurisprudence.

Today we see the never-ending struggle of the Christians to enforce their moral views by means of legal sanction. The examples are numerous: Lon Mabon's homophobic terrorism, the efforts that stop short of nothing to suppress a woman's control of her own body, and the list might go on to considerable length, including the lamentable domination of Clam Chowder as soup of the day on Fridays.

The Witch views Civil Authority as a passing phenomena, something that comes and goes. Under no circumstances does the Witch seek to impose her faith or her morals by means of legal sanction.

To the Witch, law is a tool by which civilization is ordered. To the Christian, law is too often a tool by which Christian ideals are enforced and social conformity is required.

To say that the Witches are nonconformists is to put it mildly. The Witch celebrates diversity and seeks a Law that is humane and sane.

The Christian feels compelled to conform the whole race to his moral and spiritual beliefs and uses Law as but one tool by which he might do so.

Conclusion

Upon what basis can one claim to be both a Christian and a Witch?

If the foregoing has merit, one certainly cannot make that claim on logical grounds. The two viewpoints are so opposite, so mutually exclusive as to make Christian-Witch a true oxymoron.

Moreover, to accept the concept of Christian-Witch carries certain dangers to the Craft:

Firstly, it allows the Christian viewpoint and psychology to interpret and invade The Craft, where it will inevitably seek to redefine it in Christian terms:

Secondly, it allows our ancient and unrelenting enemy a role in our own definition of terms. That is something that cannot be allowed if The Craft is to prosper:

Thirdly, it trivializes our Cosmology, Theology, Ethics, Psychology and Politics by supporting the unspoken proposition that one religious view is pretty much the same as another.

When Lord Bertrand Russell, a renowned agnostic, was booked into prison for anti-war activities, he was asked his religion. "Agnostic" he answered. "Well, sir, " said the guard taking down the information, "I suppose w all worship the same god, don't we?"

Witches and Christians do not worship the same God or the Same Goddess. Their two viewpoints are irreconcilable. Nor is there any merit in attempting reconciliation.

Blessed Be

PAGAN PLACE

An opinionated column with Mireille

Are you a good witch or a bad witch? A good Christian or a bad Christian? What a question! So many times, people make assumptions about a person's character based on their own personal ethics and religious beliefs. I'm not just talking about Christians. We as Pagans make all kinds of assumptions about other people, especially Christians. I suppose it's fair enough to acknowledge that many of us left Christianity due to feelings of oppression, bigotry, outright hostility and intolerance, but that isn't the case for everyone. The Christian mystics experience a sense of rapture and a sincere connection to their God that many of us (should we have the experience) would recognize as a true invocation of our Gods in an intense ritual setting. Perhaps we should understand and realize that much of Christianity's (or Judaism, Muslim, etc.) doctrine and dogma is what causes us so much consternation and anguish, not the people. I could go on and on in this vein, but as it turns out, a friend of mine Cynne, also had some thoughts on the subject:

MY SECRET LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN

BY CYNNE, HOUSE OF BAPH

"You're a good, Christian woman," Cindy's mom said to me on the phone the other day. Now, I wasn't about to disagree with her, as this was about the highest compliment she, a proper Southern Baptist woman, could pay me. Besides, I think it would disturb her greatly if I told her that her daughter had been friends with a Pagan. In her mind, that would be tantamount to consorting with the Devil himself, and it would bring all sorts of grief into Cindy's life if she tried to retain our friendship. I just smiled to myself and thanked her.

Often I have introduced Cindy to my Pagan friends as " the most tolerant Southern Baptist I know," much to their amusement. She has now taken to referring to me as "the most Christian Pagan she knows." At first I laughed at this seeming oxymoron. Christian Pagan? It sounds like a surefire road to schizophrenia, I thought, having left the arms of the Catholic Church almost 10 years ago. But then I thought again. What exactly did a Christian like Cindy mean when she described me, an avowed Pagan, as a Christian? What did her mother mean, when she knows absolutely nothing about my religious choices or upbringing?

I suppose that first and foremost, a Christian is a follower of a Christian church, a church which acknowledges Jesus Christ as it savior and the Son of God, and takes the Bible, in some form or another, as its holy book. But I really don't think that Cindy or her mother meant this when referring to me. What made me "Christian" to them?

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O.K., we're all going to run into a few Christian jerks who will belittle us and slander our beliefs, sometimes on national television, but that doesn't mean we have to condemn their entire religion. Let's face it, we have some jerks of our own, and none of us want to be judged on the basis of their actions. Unfortunately, though, we validate some of the negative stereotypes on our own, without any help from Christians, through our own voices against our own community. We must not only avoid "Christian bashing," but also "ATC bashing," "Georgian bashing," "coven bashing," etc. I know we can't possibly like or agree with everyone, and I am the last person to advocate total white bread and Smurf love. But I do advocate a little more judging of an individual on his or her own merits, not by who you may have seen them talking to at the last community full moon. Not all Christians or Christian sects are bad and intolerant, not all Pagans or Pagan sects are good and tolerant. Balance folks, its a fact of life.

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"Do this! Now, that." I listen and obey. My objective self is laughing as I go places I dare not under ordinary sight. The things we do in the name of healing! Finally, slowing in my work, I sense that feeling of wholeness, of security. Is it mine or the grove's? Does it matter? Peace and tranquillity permeate this little forest. It radiates outward to illuminate the meadows. I realize the shining, full moon has come out from hiding. Not a single cloud in the sky, as a matter of fact. "When did this happen?" I whispered to a sister Priestess who was standing naked in the meadow. She replied "I was determined to have my Moon-bath!" The rest of my time was spent with the elements and being with the grove. I am amazed to see vibrating trees. I can almost hear them speak to one another, to the sky, the sea.

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Steve Wells cont.

grant for a cultural arts center but it never materialized. But we had a lot of dreams."

Crossroads is a metaphysical learning center because of Wells' personal interest in New Age, Pagan and Native American Spirituality. "Broadly, I'm an eclectic Neo-Pagan. I've been calling myself a Witch for 13 years. I have also been initiated into a Native American Shamanic tradition, and I have been playing with plants all of my life. That's where it really began." said Wells. His love of plants manifested in work as a landscaper for many years, and time spent living on 40 acres in the Okanagon Valley with his partner, Cedar Acosta.

"Over the last 8 or 10 years we have developed a tradition which we like to describe as Medicine Witches on the Water Course Way. We are very grounded and bonded to the earth. Part of me really wants to be in the country still, but we were literally thrown back into the city. I developed a severe back ailment during ceremony which terminated my ability to homestead."

I think Crossroads needed to be in the City. The intent has always been clear to make it an urban Center in Seattle and particularly on Capitol Hill. In fact. I had envisioned it to be near this intersection." (of 12th, Madison and Union) said Wells.

The city can be a challenging place for healing work because urban distractions - sidewalks, concrete, and noise, can isolate us from the environment. But Wells believes we need to overcome this challenge. "Even though we live in the cities we do need to go out to nature to connect with the Earth. But we need to be able to make that connection here in the urban areas as well. In fact, making it here is probably more important. I'm not saying it is better than doing work out in the country - that's crucial, but I am saying that we needed a place like this to enable us to work here as well," he said.

Crossroads is committed to creating coalitions between the many cultural, social, and spiritual groups which come here. Wells is particularly interested in encouraging links between oppressed groups and minorities, like gays and lesbians, Pagans and women; groups which do not always see eye to eye with one another.

"Let's face it, even within the same community, we tend to fight with each other. We need to have a place like this to create a unified voice. We don't have to agree with each other on every point, but we should have mutual respect for each other's paths., We really need to get together because people like Jessie Helms and George Bush laugh at all of us."

Another goal for Wells is to create a place where each individual visitor may feel safe. "We want a space that is safe enough for people to risk healing. Healing can be very challenging. It almost always hurts. You have to pull up stuff that you don't really want to deal with."

Trying to achieve these goals can be tough. While most people appreciate the diversity of Crossroads, there have been some who have expressed anger or disapproval because Crossroads has hosted individuals or groups whose philosophy or work did not agree with their spiritual ethics.

"That is one of the things that really pushes my buttons," explained Wells, "What I don't like is when I hear people saying that what so-and-so is doing is evil and I don't want to talk about it anymore. To me that is the fundamentalist line in any group. I've got the truth, I'm right, you're wrong and I'm non-negotiable on the subject."

"Crossroads does not align itself to any one group, all are welcome. I've had people say things like, 'Well why did you have these people and not our people here?' And my answer is always, 'Because they contacted me and showed enthusiasm and a deep commitment to their work. That doesn't mean that their particular work is more valid to us than yours. We would be glad to have your path here as well, if you would like to present it to us, and purchase space or time as they did.'"

Wells does not allow his personal taste to influence his decisions for groups to use the facilities.

"I really love to see anyone who is really excited about their path, regardless of what exactly it is they are doing. The subject matter almost becomes secondary to the energy with which someone does their work." he said.

Another issues Wells deals with is trying to schedule events which do not clash with one another. "If one room has a mediation group and another has a drumming circle, that won't always work. But that is a logistical issue rather than an ethics or respect issue and can be handled with the scheduling board. That can be a trip sometimes."

Wells' personal metaphysical taste is in work that deals with raw energy. "I like things which allow you to get to feel, integrate and learn how to work with energy and intuition. I also like things that are grounded, work that is useful and helps people better their lives. I really like to see musical and multi-cultural events, especially events that let you set aside your intellectual perceptions and allow you to integrate mind, body and spirit:" he said.

Crossroads is currently a state recognized, non-profit organization, and is awaiting federal non-profit status. While Wells welcomes governmental and corporate funding to augment Crossroads capabilities, he emphasizes that Crossroads is ultimately dependent on community support.

"We try to run it in a business format - charging fees for services. We have done a great deal of community service, with free lectures and events to give back to the community. But the intent is very much for this to be self-sustaining to the community. Whether that comes from paying rent, or paying for space or for classes and workshops, donations or volunteer work, that type of support is the most important part of our funding. This place does not belong to me or any one individual, it belongs to the community, and depends on the community for sustenance."

Crossroads is currently in an expansion phase. It has increased the board of directors and is planning on acquiring new space nearby. Wells, who has personally invested thousands of hours of volunteer work, is pleased to have recently hired a volunteer coordinator. "I have been running this place up till now, with the help of periodic volunteers. Now we are beginning to get some people in here on a regular basis."

For the future Wells' vision of a self-sustaining community center continues to develop. "I envision Crossroads of the future to be in an old church or similar facility, a large space with grounds. It will have an educational wing, and a wellness center that will practice a variety of natural medicine paths. I also would like it to have a cafe, and a retail area for community members to sell crafts, and books and tools. An important addition will be a Children's area, I see it as more than a daycare, but not as formal as a school. It will be a place for the next generation of Neo-Pagans and Earth-centered people to remember that magick is always real, and will encourage them to develop their psychic gifts in a way that we weren't able to in our Judeo-Christian upbringing. And all of this will be set in the middle of a garden.

CROSSROADS LEARNING CENTER IS LOCATED AT 1412 12TH AVE. CALL 325-8790

Letter(s)

Ye Stone:

Perhaps you already know the Hebrew word for Stone is Sela, which is the same as the West Semitic Mother Goddess Shala, "great Woman."

I enjoyed Magickal Times. A suggested amendment for your mini-glossary:

Androgyny: Maleness embracing female characteristics.
Gynandry: Femaleness embracing male characteristics.

Which leads me to some commentary inspired by your essay on gender dysphoria's relationship to paganism. The current language of intersexual politics and medicine is one created mostly by men striving imperfectly to comprehend (or capture as their own) that which is opposite to their experience; of physicians seeking to provide clinical perspective on the pain observed in dysphoric individuals; and of individuals seeking to justify themselves in the face of outward prejudice and inward doubt. It is an error to impose such a vocabulary (let alone the cultural trappings of costume and fashion) upon any shamanistic or divine capacity or activity, for most of the resultant language, and the myths this language embrace, is inherently misogynist, and even in well-meaning hands demeans women.

Consider the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. It is the story of a predatory female's defeat and negation by the passive male. She wants him; he is indifferent. She pursues him; he absorbs her; she ceases to exist.

Had the feminine component prevailed, "she" would have kept the name Salmacis. Had the fusion been mutual, it/they would have required a new or composite name representing their radical unity. The unfortunate fact is, masculine capacity is broadened in this myth while feminine capacity is annihilated. That is why Hermaphroditus kept his name and there was no more her.

The capacity to name oneself is the power of creation. The capacity to remove the names of others is the power of destruction. Many commentators, mostly men, have romanticized the triumph of Hermaphroditus, whose "androgyny" indeed places Andro first, providing at best a sugar-coated misogyny aimed at the empowerment of passive-aggressive men at the expense of women.

The myth gets another try in the story of Narcissus and Echo. She desired Narcissus, but he loved only his own reflection, which he mistook for female. Echo dwindled to the point that she could no longer act in her own behalf. She could only repeat his words of self-adoration, while he did not even know of her existence. Once more we have a myth that is anti-female, anti-goddess , and pro-masculine, even though the nature of this masculinity is not the American Marines.

Yet if we trace the origins of Salmacis and Echo, we discover they were formerly goddesses with quite a different meaning, and the interjection of their passive-aggressive male conquerors was a late occurring. Salmacis was the genius of the well of Caria and a byform of Cybele. This well contained Wisdom. That is to say, the well contained Cybele, whose epithet "Mother of Mount Ida" means she is the mother of Ideas. Any man who drank from this well was robbed of virility, but he was not feminized as occurred in later, decadent revisions. Those whom Salmacis transformed were called Corybantes, and their masculinity was increased because of the eradication of lustful needs. Corybantes believed erotic feeling caused effemination because strength was expelled in ejaculation. So the unsexed Corybantes (like Attis himself, Cybele's asexual general) were noted for their indestructibility in battle.

As for Echo, she was once called Akka or Kar, and was considered archaic when Crete was a young nation. In Crete and Akkad, she was the inventor of language, alphabets, and cuneiform writing. Hers was the first Word that filled the universe, and all other words were spun from out of that original Word. She "dwindled" because she dispersed herself by means of language (and by means of the dispersal of seed) throughout her expanding creation. She will be "whole" again when all words (and all seeds) are restored to her womb and Creation exists no more. Hence the sexlessness of such sects as the Corybantes (or the Gnostic Barbelites) was a refusal to participate in the weakening of the Mother Goddess by the continued dispersal of Her substance.

Hermaphroditus and Narcissus were late-comers originating as fertility daemons subservient to the Mother Goddess. They did not ignore or reject their lovers as in the final revisions, but proved their devotion to the Mother by means other than lustful or priapic. The later reinventions of their role came about in a fratriarchal context designed to justify the suppression of the far more ancient Mother goddess (i.e., Cybele or Artemis) in favor of come-lately gods akin to Apollo, Zeus or Attis -- ultimately Yahweh and Jesus Christ -- every one of whom in archaic pantheons was minor or altogether absent.

So myths of the loving sacrifice of male sexual urgency were transformed into fairy tales of female victims destroyed by men's heroic indifference to women's desire. Women's desire was not merely a need for sensual affection, but for authority in shaping and sustaining the natural and spiritual realms. Hermaphroditus and Narcissus are thus symbols of male hatred and envy of women's power of procreation. On a higher level, passive-aggressive demi-gods represent God's hatred for the Mother who bore him, whose power he co-opts into his own. These gods should be rejected by all who seek the healing of materiality's imperfections.

None of this is to suggest in any way that I disdain our very human capacity for shifting materially along the gender spectrum. But that which is a trick of materiality has little or nothing to do with the spirituality of transcendent personality, the dia imitatio of the worshiper who knows divinity through that aspect of the Self which is utterly and transcendantally female, and which stems from the Goddess.

This transcendent female exists in men and women. She is called the Soul. For this reason every word for Soul in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and Latin is feminine. She expresses herself not in the confused or fetishistic activity of the flesh, but by her outreaching love and longing for our divine origins.

I believe a woman can indeed become either physically or transcendently male; a man can become physically or transcendantally female; and there is a difficult third option of physical and/or transcendent unity or neutrality. But when the symbol of this transformation is perceived to be Hermaphroditus, then this is exclusively masculine to masculine. When someone, as you have done, names kitsch culture items such as long fingernails and high heel shoes as symbols of femaleness, it is all the more evident that neither material nor transcendent transformation is addressed, but only sexual play or disguise.

High heels, nail extensions, and caked on make-up may well define femaleness for some men who want either to wear it, or fuck it; but women are women with or without kitsch trappings. Likewise maleness is maleness in or out of drag. Hermaphroditus and Narcissus continue to exert interest for the modern man because they broaden the meaning of maleness. But they do so at the expense of women, women's spirituality, women's power in daily life, and the annihilated Soul of all of us.

Myths of gynandry are less popularly "appealing" in today's male-defined world because they genuinely empower women, and commonly ignore (rather than annihilate) men.

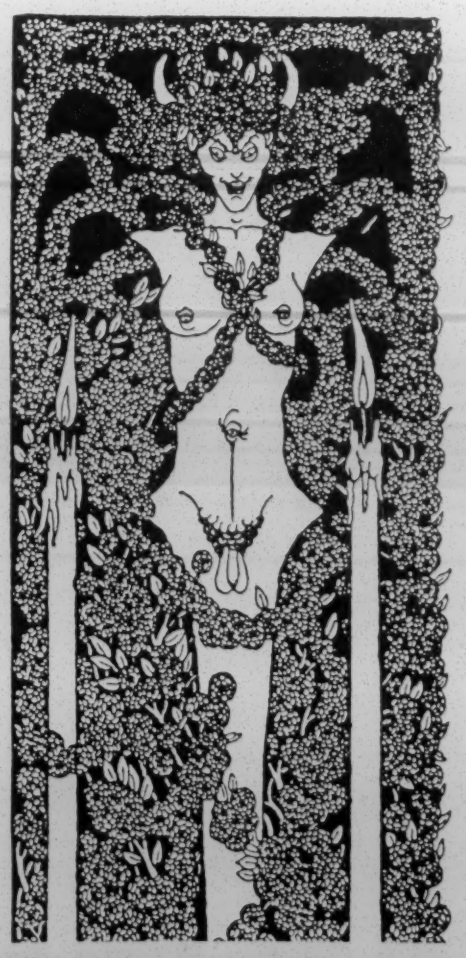
A key Gynandry myth regards the Phrygian Tree-goddess Agdistis, a byform of Cybele. Agdistis impregnated the River-nymph Nana by means of a vulva-shaped almond . Nana gave birth to Attis. His co-mother became the wetnurse of Attis, fed on the sap of the Tree of Life. This myth survived among Gnostics who believed Sophia the Holy Spirit impregnated Anna the mother of Mary, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist. An obscure zoharic myth adds that Matronita (the Lower Shekhinah) impregnated Sarah, whose husband, Abraham, was a barren mule. It is no coincidence that Sarah's son was sacrificed in the form of a deer, Elizabeth's son was beheaded for Salome ('Peace"), Jesus was wounded in the side (= castrated) then killed , and Nana's son became the castrate companion of Cybele.

The purpose of these Mother Goddess myths is to place all procreative authority with the Mother, even that which is virile, and to explain the inescapable tragedy of Death as a fertility event that enriches the Mother. It could certainly be argued that gynandrous mythology promotes killing and castrating men in much the same way that androgyny promotes the annihilation of women. But in the myths which uphold the Mother Goddess as supreme, the male principle is treated with affection; when he is sacrificial, he profoundly grieved over; and finally he is resurrected, as Tammuz, Adonis and Jesus are resurrected. This is much more generous than the myths of Salmacis and Echo who are disempowered, then fade into non-existence.

In summation, gynandrous myth gives a secondary but esteemed place to men; androgynous myth simply disposes of women.

Thine, Jessica

PS: I'm sending you a poem which you may use or not as you choose. In case you're interested in past credits, I am the Author of The Encyclopedia of Amazons, and a recipient of the Lambda Award and World Fantasy Award.



Gweneth's response to Ms. Salmonson's letter:

First of all, let me say that this letter reeks of stereotypical masculine pedantry as well as the usual sexism, myth and folklore misappropriation and hatred which is common to radical feminist-separatist diatribes. This leads me to suspect that the author herself may be a male-to-female transsexual with a double-bladed ax to grind. In any case, Hear This: Hating men will not make you more female *or* more of a woman. It will also not effect any positive social change, which was the intent of my article. While you spent a lot of time and space ranting about nothing new and little true and making attempts to, in your own words "remove the names of others" you really didn't offer any *constructive* information. You also did not name yourself. I name myself Androgyne. I was born male with an androgyne self. I have answered the call of the woman in me and now live as a woman. Name yourself so that we all may know who speaks, wherefore and from whence.

As I said in my article, I am well aware of *many* myths, magicks, folk tales and customs dealing with androgyny but that I would not belabor the readers or my space limitations with but a few. I wish you had been as thoughtful, but I really thought that folks should see your letter in it's entirety.

I will take this point-by-point:

Your definitions of androgyny and "gynandry" (a coined word) seem to be your own. While I have toyed with the idea of using the word "gynander" I chose not to because it is clumsy and strained, as are many neologisms. Besides, the principle of androgyny really does represent true balance, with neither gender predominating. There is Male and Female and Androgyne (or technically "Hermaphrodite") as "real" states; then there is masculine, feminine and androgynous, which are tendencies toward those "real" states. The Androgyne combines the Male and the Female. The androgynous person combines the masculine and the feminine. And *no* human being is completely Male or Female. Gender exists along a spectrum.

The vocabulary which is used (and which is constantly being evolved) by the gender community is chosen for it's accuracy, a principle alien to the majority of feminist mythological writings, your own included. Again, you do not cite any particulars (as a matter of fact you didn't really address much of what I said in my article, was this just an excuse for you to spout your own pet rap?) What would *you* call a TS, TV or TG? You didn't offer any alternative vocabulary or even suggest where we may find one. You certainly didn't demonstrate that the current vocabulary is misogynist (an observation that I'm still trying to figure out!).

In the original account of Hermaphroditus it is quite clear that Salmacis is intent upon availing herself of Hermaphroditus' charms against his will. She makes several very aggressive suggestions before allowing him to believe that she is leaving him the freedom and privacy of her pool. Meanwhile she spies on him from the bushes and the instant that he steps into the water "I have won! He's mine!" she cries and leaps in after him and *attempts to rape him.* Did I mention that he was a virgin? Anyway, back in those days they didn't know that <u>No means No</u>, and "she held him as he fought and snatched kisses as he struggled... Finally she encircled him as he strove against her in his desire to escape... even as the octopus grabs and holds fast its enemy in the deep with tentacles let loose on every side." Doesn't sound very consensual to me. Well, she prayed to the gods that they might never be separated and they said "Ah, what the hell, sure." and their bodies then literally became one. It concerns me that feminist writers are so intent upon turning any story that has a female villain in it into a misogynist issue. If the woman is good and beautiful, desirable and virtuous, she is being "objectified" If she is unethical and lustful, or unattractive and scheming, she is proof of the author's misogyny, not simply a person with human failings. Salmacis deserved to be wasted, she was a rapist. However, poor Hermaphroditus was saddled with tits he never wanted. He does not feel that his masculine capacity has been broadened, he feels cursed. Talk about victim blaming! I dare say that you would not call a female rape victim "passive-aggressive."

You say "the myth gets another try in the story of Narcissus..." First of all, this story has nothing to say about androgynes or gynanders, it is about deceit and vanity! The only thing these myths have in common is the theme of the spurned scheming female.

At any rate, Narcissus *most certainly did <u>not</u>* mistake his reflection for a female's. In frustration he says: "...each time that I bend down to kiss the limpid waters he in turn strains upward with his eager lips...Why, incomparable boy, do you deceive me?" You say that Echo dwindled but you don't seem to remember why. Was it because of a *man*? Nooo. Could it be...*SATAN*? Nooo. It was because she pissed off Juno by detaining her with idle chatter while all of her fellow nymphs (previously "frolicking") with Jove escaped into the woods uncaught. My, what a nice girl. You say that Narcissus did not know of Echo's existence but he clearly said to her "I would rather die than let you possess me." after she (like Salmacis) came on way too strong.

You say that these myths are anti-female, anti-goddess, and pro-masculine (as if masculine = evil and nasty, grody and icky). Why, because in each one there is a "bad girl?" Perhaps you didn't notice that the men in these stories didn't fare too well. It seems to me that they are simply tragedies. It is apparent that you are of the school which sees only male-destroying/female affirming myth as worthwhile or instructive. Did it ever occur to you that folks are folks. Sometimes they wrong each other, sometimes not. Gender, here, is irrelevant. I also find your stereotyping of masculinity pretty offensive. Does the United States Marine Corps (not the "American Marines") typify masculinity? I think not. It does typify the ways in which men are abused by this culture and the unhealthy, violent, and unrealistic expectations placed on them by other men *and women* who have bought into this sick system.

You say nothing about how you traced the origins of Salmacis and Echo and, frankly, I'm suspicious of your sources. The epithet "Mother of Mount Ida" means that Cybele is the "Mother of Ideas" Why? Because they sound alike? Can you substantiate this with sound etymology or is it simply inspired mythopoeia? I am equally suspicious of your mis-andronist interpretation of, well, everything. In your treatment of "devotion... by means other than lustful or priapic" (i.e. having to do with erections -ed.) and the "loving sacrifice of male sexual urgency" you seem to suggest that phallic sex is dirty or unsuitable as worship. And your choice of themes still more makes me question your native gender and the underlying psychological implications of your obsessions.

I find it interesting that you feel that the "transcendent personality, the *dia imitatio* (imitation goddess?) of the worshipper...is utterly and transcendently female." Are you actually suggesting that the ultimate, transcendental spiritual reality is female *only?* That "God" is female only and never male? Even if spirit *were* transcendent, which I do not believe, I feel that it would be beyond gender.

You said "when the symbol of this transformation (gender transition) is Hermaphroditus, then this is exclusively masculine to masculine." Who brought up Hermaphroditus? You did. *I* wrote about Diónysos and Beltane May Queens! And how do you figure this masculine to masculine stuff?

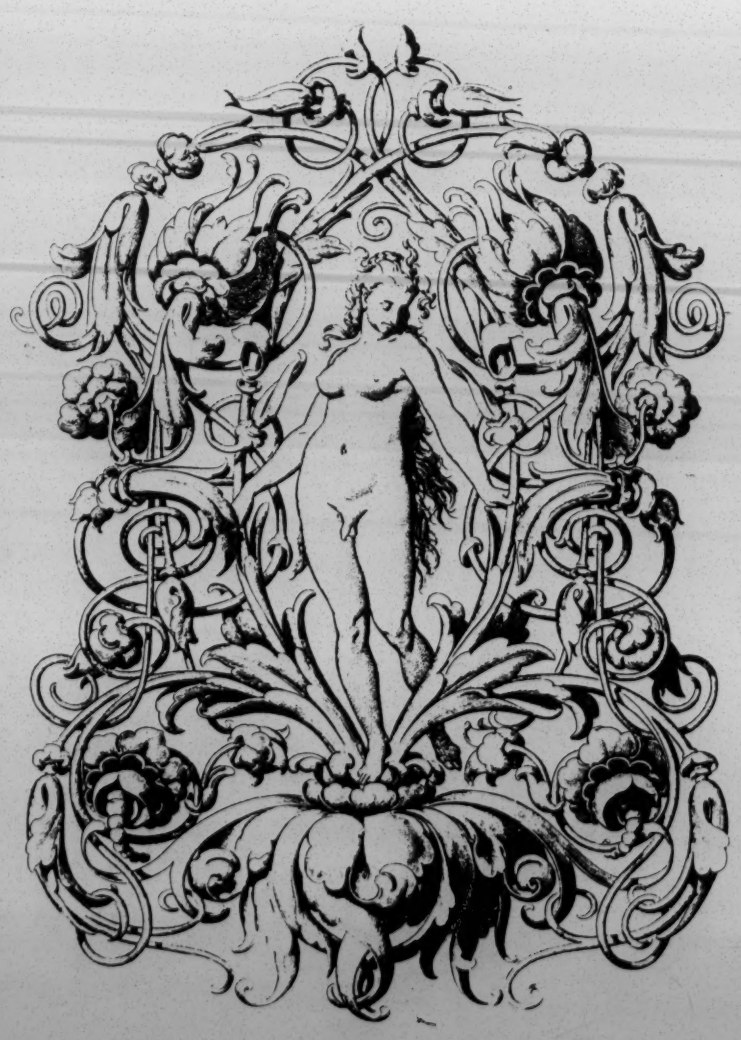
When in my article did I ever say anything about high heels, nail extensions or make-up being a symbol of anything? (which they are). *What I said* was that someone may (or should) feel uncomfortable calling *me* "he" when *I* was dressed in those items. And yes, I take this as a personal slam, because I mentioned those things in reference to myself wearing them. Listen up: whether you like it or not, certain "culture items," kitsch or not, are seen as expressing gender. Let us not confuse femininity with being female. The majority of signals that we send about what our gender is are culturally agreed upon (or debated) artifices. *We are all passing.* We are all attempting to be accepted as we wish to be by *communicating with symbols.* You also imply that only men are attracted to women who choose to wear heels, skirts, nails and make-up. Not all lesbians are dykes, you know. And by the way, *my* nails are my *own.*

I can see why you won a fantasy award. Where did you get your information from, Barbara Walker? Merlin Stone? *Mary Daly?* I at least cited a *few* references.

It is evident to me that your obsession with myths in which the male is castrated and obliterated is founded on your own desire to justify to yourself (and to those women by whom you wish to be accepted) your own castration and the obliteration of your own maleness (literal or figurative). It is perfectly fine for one to take whatever steps are necessary to communicating one's gender, as you and I and many others have done. But I am curious. Do you ever wear the "culture items" of the American Female? Kitsch or otherwise, keep in mind that the dress associated with butch dykes is now a real part of our female culture. It is true, long nails and heels do not make the woman, but *neither does the surgery.* The woman is indeed in the soul.

--Gweneth.

Dear readers: I warned you that I wasn't afraid to print (or espouse) unpopular opinions. But I must apologize for the tone my response. What can I say? My claws came out. Mmrrrowww! But I realize I may have caused offense to whom none was intended. My apologies. Some of my best friends are dykes and feminists. And a special thanks to those who discouraged me from printing the first draft of this response.



The Quest of a Demoness

The Ragged beast arose from
Depths of Earth devoid of mirth
Seeking myrrh and aloes for
Her dying mate, her crying
Pitiful among beasts.
She sought in temples and was
Turned away by monks who pray
No beast like her may stand where
God is praised. She, sadly dazed,
Sought farther to the East
For succor or for slightest friend.

A mendicant encountered
Begging alms she asked, with qualms,
"Good sir, may I recount my
Sorrowed need for spice to feed
My sickly dying spouse?"
"Behind me, monstrous wench!" he
Shouted harsh. "Into yon marsh
Go ye, amidst the stench to
Remain bound until the sound
Of Jubilee doth thee arouse!"
Against such wrath she could not fend.

Fifty years she waited, trapped
By the Curse, then left no worse
Than before, still fated to
Her tardy quest, and hardy
As are many of her ilk.
She came to a palace steeped
In leisure. Vulgar pleasure
Filled the golden chalice of
The Sultan of the Court of Love
Where maidens clad in silk,
With flesh like milk like willows bend.

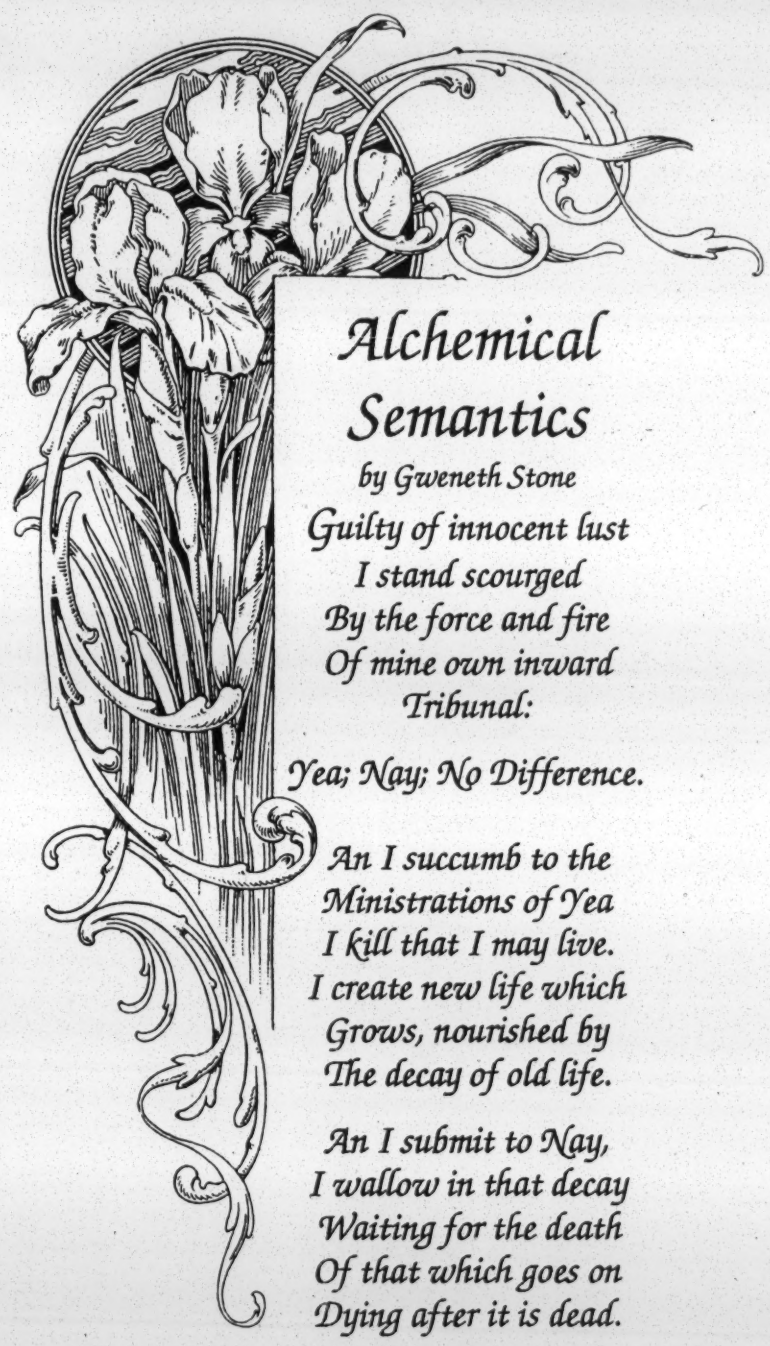
"Sultan of jotful entries
May I ask aid for my task?
From pot of myrrh be lent me
But a jot, the merest spot
To take with me to Hell."
"Hideous she-demon! Dare
You request the very best?
Death's repulsive seeman of
The dark land shall not set hand
To my wives' splendid oil!"

At length, within a forest
She spied wild aloes, and smiled
For joy to pluckno more than
Needs required, and yet guards fired
Bolts -- thus does fortune spoil.

Sadness was within her as
She lay down wearing Death's crown,
Lacking aloe or myrrh she
Hoped to take below to make
Her ailing husband well.
Her final words, "In my dark
Place the sun, when day is done,
Rests brighter than the sky of
Earth has seen; and none so mean
As these in Sheol dwell."

With arrow in her heart she
Turned to stone, and there alone
She stays. The saddest part is
Now there grows myrrh and aloes
All about a strange rock
That was a Demoness who
Loved more greatly -- more than lately
Humans can confess. And
Spirits know that those laid low
By selfish Man will walk
The highest regions in the end.

-Jessica Amanda Salmonson



Alchemical Semantics

by Gweneth Stone

Guilty of innocent lust
I stand scourged
By the force and fire
Of mine own inward
Tribunal:

Yea; Nay; No Difference.

An I succumb to the
Ministrations of Yea
I kill that I may live.
I create new life which
Grows, nourished by
The decay of old life.

An I submit to Nay,
I wallow in that decay
Waiting for the death
Of that which goes on
Dying after it is dead.

An I revel in the
Glory of No Difference,
Yea and Nay dissolve
Into the feverish
Night of Life
On-Going: Combine
In a celebration of Life.

Innocent of guilty lust
I stand purged.

The Protection of the Honey Isle

A GREAT FESTIVAL ABOUT TWO LAKES. A LAKE SURROUNDS ME, ENCOMPASSES THE CAER WHICH SURROUNDS ANOTHER CIRCLE WITH DEEP MOATS.

A DEEP CAVERN OPENS BEFORE ME, SHADOWED BY GREAT ROCKS. THE DRAGON COMES OUT AND CRAWLS TOWARDS THE CUPS OF SONG,

OF THE SONG OF THE CUPS OF GOLD. THE GOLDEN CUPS ARE IN HIS HAND, HIS HAND IS ON THE KNIFE AND THE KNIFE IS ABOVE MY HEAD.

GLORY TO YOU, VICTORIOUS BELI, SON OF KING MANOGAN, WHO DEFENDS THE HONEY ISLE.

-Taliesin
(c. 6th cent. Welsh bard)

3 July, MOON

Meditational lark, in the dark, in the park Naked, take the chance, as I dance, joyfully prance
Clouds scudding, pulse thudding, passion budding To my Will-borne tune, comes the boon, O Holy Moon
Goddess-light gracing, ecstatic tracing, my heart racing I quarter the Tree glade, seductive shade, I am the Maid
Intrusive voices, draw nigh, passing by, and then die The Trees and I run, become One, it is done!
Candle flame-spear, one here, one there Spirit sparks of others, my sisters, my brothers
Treading Faery-Round, airs above ground, silvery sound Zephyr and Moonlight, dress me, caress me
Shh! Stalking is Mel I am Shel I am Shel Oh! Thrilling the seek, Oh! catch me, please match me
Thrice filled, flowing, ancient knowing, spirit glowing I, Priestess of worth, since Time's birth, for Life's mirth
Sing, Dance, Love my Divine Spark, in the park, in the dark.

- Zanoni

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EVERY MAN AND EVERY WOMAN IS A STAR.
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O.T.O

GNOSTIC MASS

PRESENTED BY HORIZON OASIS, O.T.O

FOR LOCATION, DATE AND TIME, CALL THE PAGAN INFO LINE 233-8617

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A Guide to Neo-Pagan, Magickal and Earth-Spirited Businesses and Organizations

Listings are in alphabetical order.

"As-You-Like-It" Metaphysical Lending Library - 12,000 rare books. Membership $15.00 per year. 915 E. Pine, #401 Open Mon-Fri 11-2 & 7-9, Sat 11-4 & 7-9. Closed Sundays.

Barnstokker Garth, Local Garth affilliated with the Ring of Troth Asatru religious group. Does seasonal rituals and meets bi-weekly for runic magic class. For info write: Barnstokker Garth P.O. Box1972, Seattle WA 98111-1972

Covenant of Universalist Unitarian Pagans (CUUPS) -- Full Moon Rituals on the Friday prior to the Full Moon at 7pm. Call 547 8093 for more information.

CUUPS General Meeting -- General meetings are open to the public, call 789-1560 for meeting dates and times.

Crossroads Learning Center -- A non-profit educational forum providing space for a variety of lectures, classes and workshops. 1412 12th Ave. Seattle. 325-8790

Cromaat Camp, OTO (Ordo Templi Orientis)-- Seeking members and people to give free lectures, demonstrations etc. P.O. Box 9075 Seattle, WA 98109

Edge of the Circle Books -- A Magickal Bookstore specializing in books, supplies and gifts for the Neo-Pagan and Magickal communities. Open 10-8 every day. Closed on natural religion and Neo-Pagan Holy Days. Call 726 1999.

Garran Siorghlas, Evergreen Grove of Ar nDraíocht Fein, A Druid Fellowship -- Holds Grove meetings and potluck regularly in Burien. Call 241-7899 for more information.

The Holy Isle Grove of The Primitive Celtic Church -- Presents a community Druid worship ceremony and potluck on the 1st Sunday of every month. Call. 206-723-5746 for date, time and location. P.O. Box 28646 Seattle, WA 98118

Horizon Oasis OTO (Ordo Templi Orientis) performs the Gnostic Mass, a Thelemic ritual, on the Sunday following the Sun's entering of each zodiac sign. Call the Pagan Info Line for date, time and location. 233-8617.

Illuminati Bavaria MC (Motorcycle Club) -- 12700 NE 124th St., Suite 5087 Kirkland WA 98034.

Mandala Books and Gallery -- Eastern and Western esoteric art, books and supplies. Mon-Sat 10-7, Sun 12-5. 527-2979

The Pagan Culture and Spirit Web -- UW campus Pagan outreach and educational group. Sponsors Community Full Moons on the Saturday prior to the Full Moon each month. Call 938-4489 for more information.

Sacred Moon,A Silent Meditation -- An outdoor open community event in Lincoln Park - gather together on the night of the Full Moon - call 938-3828 for meeting times & more information

Sylvan Grove, Thirteen week, Outer Grove study group. Basic Wicca with emphasis on the Sylvan tradition. Call 363-1908

The Tea Society, An informal discussion/support group for androgynes, she-males, two-spirits, or persons of the third gender, and those who love them. Emphasis is on the spiritual and mystical aspects of androgyny. Call Gwen Stone at 723-5746 and leave a message.

Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth, AktionPoint Luna -- P.O. Box 111327 Tacoma, WA 98411-1327

Tenzing Momo, Herbal Apothecary -- Bulk herbs, tinctures, essential oils, Chinese medicines, special orders. 93 Pike Pl. in the Pike Place Market. 623-9837

Vortex Camp OTO(Ordo Templi Orientis), P.O. Box 9490 Tacoma WA 98409

BBS's:

Pro-Star Earth Forum -- 206-941-0317

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Satyresque Sorcerer Seeks Lovely Lilith-esque Lady companion to wine, dine and entertain. Interested souls may contact me at 155 21st Ave. #309 Seattle WA 98122

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Dark Goddess, lead me to my butch master above all other gods. Let my soul be bared to her savage sexual power. Let my feminine nectar be drained by her lustful aggression. Let the knife remain at the sacred circle's edge so that I may never know her face, or drag our perfect love into the light of day. So mote it be. Gay female, 31, 8° Virgo rising. Diana of the Green Woods P.O.Box 20341, Seattle WA 98102

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Housemate wanted to share 3BR 1BA house in Redmond on 1/3 acre. Nice, sunny, all amenities. Huge organic garden. I am 33 Y.O. earthy, eclectic guy with 3 cats. U be mindful, non-smoking otherwise eccentric lover of life. Prefer woman. Tim: 868-8614.

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Apprentice, newly aware. Searching for truth. Would like to hear from those of like mind. Currently in rehab, will reply to all. Craig - 15900 227th Ave S.E. Maple Valley, WA 98038

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The Tea Society. An informal discussion group for androgynes, two-spirits, or third gender people and those who love them is now forming. Emphasis will be on the spiritual and mystical aspects of androgyny as well as on discovering and defining the role(s) of androgynes in society. Call Gwen Stone at 723-5746 and leave a message.

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VOLUNTEERS WANTED!! Edge of the Circle Books is looking for a few good Pagans. We are looking for volunteers at the Edge as well as the soon-to-open Green Man Café. We are looking for folks with an interest in working with the public along with computer and minor food prep skills. All volunteers will receive a 10% discount on store and café purchases as well as love and attention! Come in to the store during business hours (10AM - 8PM every day) or call PAN-1999 for more info.

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Basilisk Arcane Archives Scriptorium. Hard-core academic research on Asian, African, and Classical European Esoterica. For a catalogue send $5.00 cash or M.O. (no cheques) to: B.A.A.S. James Barr, P.O. Box 85663 Seattle, WA 98145-1663.

Wiccan Attourney. John Greifendorf, 1219 Westlake Ave. N. Suite 206, Seattle, WA 98109. 206-282-2208. Wills, estate planning, trusts, real estate and business law. Payment plans available Visa/MC, barter considered.

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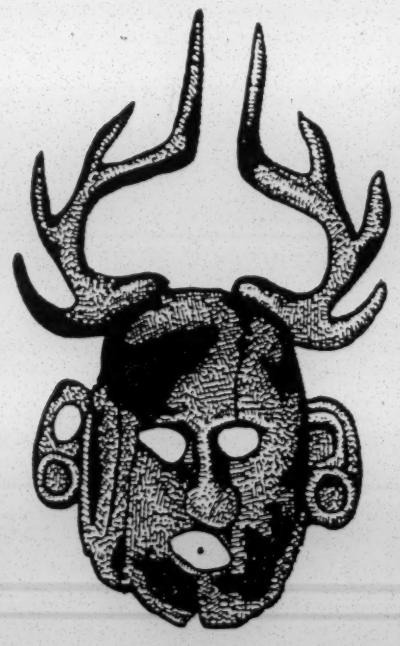

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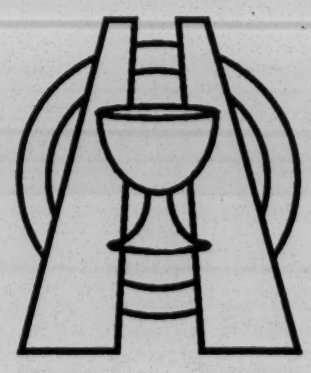
(continued on November. 17, 24, & December 1)

For more information and class location call 324-5538

Tribal Jams!

Presented by The Holy Isle Grove
of the Primitive Celtic Church
(A Reconstructionist Druid Tradition)



An opportunity to experience the Trance-portation
of Ecstatic Drumming, Dancing and Feasting.
Second and Fourth Tuesdays of every month!
Bring drums, rattles, bells and other percussive instruments.
Also bring finger foods and drinks for the feasting
and cushions or blankets to sit on.
Call 723-5746 for time and location.